



Lame Deer Schools of Promise - Planning for Improvement January, 2011

School improvement is not a mystery; effective instruction is the most important factor effecting positive learning outcomes. Improving instruction requires us first to carefully look at what we now do and what we should do in our classrooms. Do we have the heart to reverse the status quo? We must be willing to remove any barriers that prevent an honest assessment of our current practices and reorient our time and energy to common sense practices that will make a difference.

Transformation News --- Jo Swain:

Happy New Year! Over the holiday break a great deal of planning was completed to gear up for the second semester. Middle and high school staff will continue their focus on a school-wide management system, providing enrichment and remediation experiences for students, and to explore the use of the VisionNet system, which will bring classes to the district that are nontraditional in nature. We are really looking forward to how this tool can provide additional assistance to 7-12 students. The SIG team continues to meet twice a month to review action plans assisting with the federal grant implementation. Remember, all SIG meeting minutes and agendas are on the Lame Deer Web site under the Schools of Promise link for easy access.

On Wednesday, December 15th, the entire school district staff celebrated all the school improvement work accomplished to date. The lengthy list of successes was celebrated by all who attended with Subway sandwiches, drinks, and a raffle! The following areas were recognized:

- ❖ Creation and maintenance of the K-12 SIG team
- ❖ Development of the District Action Plan—Huge!
- ❖ Ongoing Professional Learning Communities—BLTs and ALT
- ❖ Implementation of research based strategies and curriculum, K-12
- ❖ Development of a new school day schedule providing extended learning time
- ❖ Acquired new technology—computers, Elmos, and projectors
- ❖ Development of a streamlined data collection system for discussion and analysis

- ❖ Development of grade level and subject area teams - PLCs
- ❖ Ongoing discussion regarding improving graduation rates, attendance rates, and at-risk interventions.
- ❖ Completed the first semester with focused staff development such as MBI and SOPPAS
- ❖ Started the initial conversations about setting student growth goals for teachers—implementation of SOPPAS teacher evaluation system
- ❖ Created the Change Toolkit for distribution of information
- ❖ Created monthly board reports and newsletters regarding the SIG process
- ❖ Developed the Schools of Promise link on the Lame Deer District Web site....
- ❖ Let's Celebrate!



Upcoming meeting dates:

SIG Team--January 5 – 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.,

Administration Building

SIG Team Meetings in Billings – January 13-14

SIG Team--January 19 – 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.,

Administration Building



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Instruction News---Deb Glass:

I hope all of you have had a wonderful holiday and are ready to start the New Year with reinforced educational resolutions. This has been a short month in actual days at school, but by no means short when I look at the amount of work that has been done. I have coached teachers in math, reading, English, and health as the days flew by. Then the teachers were introduced to the SOPPAS evaluation materials, and I will be assisting them in understanding what is needed for each of the subsections that constitutes best teaching practices.

Two of the math consultants visited during December and worked both one-to-one and in groups with the math teachers. Instructional issues with Carnegie Math were discussed and plans for the inclusion of specific math skills were set up by the math team. I have also started receiving a printout of the students' usage of the Cognitive Tutor computer program on a weekly basis. This data can be used to analyze progress, time on task, and instructional time within the classroom. Algebraic Thinking for the younger students is doing quite well and the students are excited about learning.

Our visit by the Reading and Language Arts consultant was rescheduled because of weather conditions. Our Corrective Reading program is running smoothly and students are learning the specific decoding skills that could improve their reading by not needing to expend so much energy decoding that comprehension is hindered. Bridges, the other reading program, is a big success with the students, and the core English program for all grades is moving along nicely.

We have used data to connect specific content standards and benchmarks to our students' tests with the Criteria Referenced Test they take in the spring and the MAP tests that they take three times a year. This will help us teach specific skills that are found to be weak areas during testing. And, we continue to look at data to determine if the students are placed in the correct math and reading programs.

I look forward to a productive 2011 where students, teachers and administrators continue to hone their skills. Our Professional Learning Communities that take place during various prep periods are up and running. One group is looking at *Language as Culture* and the other one is studying *Reading in Core Instructional Areas*. I will be doing specific training during the early out days on lesson plans, guided practice and other topics found in the SOPPAS evaluation.

Community News --- Robert Simpson:

Robert has moved his room to the high school and is getting better acquainted with the students and staff. He is starting to meet regularly with the students. He has also identified some staff members willing to participate in the home visiting project. Robert has developed a great rapport with the community organizations in Lame Deer. He is working hand-in-hand with the Tribal Council, Housing, the Boys and Girls Club and the community groups and parents. He has been instrumental in helping develop a community organization with all the key elements involved. They are called the Dream Catchers until something better comes along. He is implementing skills he gained in the home visiting project and the Good Road of Life training to work better with parents and youth. He is working on an incentive for youth for a buffalo hunt as well as a youth Good Road of Life training in Wyoming. Robert also set up a school New Year's Eve all-nighter with drum groups, dancers, teachers and parents all involved. He collaborated with the community team he has helped develop to split the costs.

Board News - Interim Coach Nancy Coleman:

HAPPY NEW YEAR to ALL! We had a great meeting last month with a full board with many items being addressed. The two items that were tabled by the board proved to be a good strategy. With the additional time we were able to get accurate information to the board members for them to use in making their decision .

We had a training session for the Clerk, the Board Chair and the Superintendent on setting the agenda and plan on having another training session soon that will include other district trustees.

The board also had a special meeting in the month of December which was not attended by your interim board coach, but I did some research which was shared with board members as well as the superintendent on specific agenda items.

Currently we are taking applications for the board coaching position and we should be ready to fill this position soon.

From the Helena Office -- Nancy Coleman, SIG Unit Director:

District Action Plan (DAP): We are providing a template for writing the detailed action plans. We are also coordinating with the districts on the information required to write the ISAs (Intergovernmental Service Agreements) to expedite that process.

School of Promise Performance Appraisal System (SOPPAS): The approved list of the people trained in SOPPAS has been given to the district. The Labor/Management team will meet and pick one or more of the listed providers to present for a contract to the board at the January meeting. The board needs to approve the contract for those services so their work can be completed by May 2011.

SIG Staff Openings: We have received applications for both the Transformational Leader and School Board Coach positions in Lame Deer. We plan on setting up interviews after the New Year.

Overview of the Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI): This is a system approach to establish the social culture and behavior supports needed for a school to be an effective learning environment for all students. Each school has an MBI team that works to establish and teach behavior expectations. This service is being provided for the district through on-site assistance from MBI consultants with support from the SIG OPI on-site staff.

When the MBI system is in place:

- Staff are more consistent in their expectations and actions;

- Students understand and are more likely to follow rules and expectations;
- A more positive relationship exists between and among staff and students; and
- The focus is on learning.

Grant Requirements for January and February:

For the board's information we are providing a listing of things that need to be accomplished at various levels. Much of the work is a continuation from the previous month:

For the on-site OPI employees:

- Continue to provide planning for the implementation of the District Action Plan (DAP);
- Begin work with SIG District Leadership Team (DLT) to establish District Action Plans details;
- Continue to assist with organizing the collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
- Continue to support actions steps within the Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI);
- Continue to schedule external professional development providers;
- Attend SIG meeting in Billings in January with all other SIG groups;
- Continue to provide job embedded professional development through training and coaching for all staff.

For the Principal:

- Continue to attend School Improvement Team meeting(s);
- Continue to attend and coordinate professional development of the PLCs;
- Continue to lead, along with the MBI facilitator, action steps within the MBI;
- Continue the participation with the SOPPAS (Schools of Promise Performance Assessment System) to provide support and feedback to teachers on effective instruction;
- Begin the work with SIG DLT to establish District Action Plans;
- Attend SIG meeting in Billings in January with all other SIG groups;

- Continue to monitor a system to determine ‘at risk’ students based on – attendance, past class grades, discipline, support systems for success (student information system); and
- Begin gathering the baseline data for last year 2009-2010 on several grant required ‘indicators.’

For the District/Superintendent:

- Provide the board the name of the external evaluator that was selected by the labor/management team for board approval (teacher evaluations);
- Continue to support the implementation of the DAP through resources, etc.; and
- Continue to participate in the finance calls that are provided by the OPI once a month.

For teachers:

- Actively participate in collaborative PLCs;
- Continue to plan and implement lesson plans that include standards alignment with ongoing assessments;
- Continue to implement the programs for communication arts and mathematics with fidelity;
- Continue to actively participate in school improvement teams which you are involved with; and
- Begin the evaluation process with 3rd party evaluators.

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Statewide Youth and Community

Outreach – Donnie Wetzel: This was an excellent month for the Community Liaisons (CLs). They have developed some great relationships in the four key areas (Elders, Youth, Community, and Area organizations). They are being seen throughout the community and stepping in where needed to assist the SIG staff, teachers, youth and administrators. They took great initiative on setting things up during the break and volunteered their time, trucks, and also identified resources to assist with any events. Our main goal over the last few months was to be seen – face-to-face contact and

helping where needed. I feel relationships and trust are being built with our CLs and the communities they live in. They are a key factor in the SIG because they are the voice of the people and the youth. It will take some time to show the community and youth that we are there to help them and support them in the schools, but the CLs are approaching the low hanging fruit and winning small battles that will eventually bring better support.

We will now start to bring in more structure to the CLs. They will be receiving the Solid Foundations training that lays out an organized approach for them. We will offer them PTA training. We will be developing a calendar at each location to lay out goals and objectives for the next three months. After-school programs will be implemented as well as mentorship programs with community members and the tribal colleges. We will be approaching the Tribal Councils and other important entities on the reservation to collaborate and build better relationships. It will definitely be an exciting new year!

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SIG Field Consultant News -- Courtney Peterson:

- Assisted Transformation and Instruction Leaders with District Action Planning
- Site visits to Pryor, Lodge Grass and a site visit to Frazer November 15-16
- Coordinated visits by consultants Frances Bessellieu and Ann Ganzert
- Begin standards setting, IEFA coordination, and pacing planning for McDougal-Litell
- Research upcoming areas of implementation

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School Advocate News – Sarah Pierce:

Wrapping up the year and semester means planning ahead for the future. I have several projects that I am currently working on to help student achievement. Currently I am researching

summer school programs, credit recovery programs and ways to connect our students to AP and other rigorous courses across other Montana schools. I am also continuing to develop and align the goals that have been set forth by the Federal School Improvement Grant to goals that are already in place set by the state and the districts. I am also working on building communication between teachers across multiple districts. The SIG Web site should be up and running for public display soon. I am also working on building capacity at each school site in best practices in planning for professional development with outside providers and through job-embedded approaches. Teachers working toward National Board Certification through the Take One! program will have their first meeting together on January 15th at Dull Knife College. I made a short site visit to Lame Deer School. My teacher focus on this visit was to check on the progress of Corrective Reading classes and offer support. I was also assisting another teacher in finding and writing grants to continue professional development and build student achievement and I continued to support the Instructional Leader through development of instructional coaching practices.

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